

Partnership Update

LECET INNOVATIONS



QUALITY PARTNERING FOR SUCCESS

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NCCI TRANSITIONS FROM INITIATIVE TO INSTITUTE

CTER/LIUNA Inspired Program Lauded as Bridge Building Between Construction Unions and Tribes

By Pat Smutz, Communications Director, NW LECET

WASHINGTON, DC - In an historic move from being a simple 3-site demonstration program funded with federal dollars into an Indian/Labor institute, the Native Construction Careers Institute (NCCI) is proving that construction unions, tribes and contractors can all work together to deliver careers in construction on tribal lands. Under the structure of an adjunct of the Council for Tribal Employment Rights (CTER), the newly-chartered institute is preparing to carry on and improve upon this mission with the addition of the Building and Construction Trades Department of the AFL-CIO, and twelve International Unions that represent thousands of Local Construction Unions throughout the United States.

“We are fortunate to have such a distinguished group of nationally-acclaimed labor leaders pledge to respect tribal sovereignty and work with us as partners to train and employ tribal members for work on and near their reservations” said Conrad Edwards, CEO of CTER after hearing that the world’s biggest construction unions signed on to the NCCI charter. “We have worked successfully with many local construction unions on a number of reservations, but to have all the parent unions giving us the extra push to help get our people out of poverty and participating in building projects on their own reservations is almost overwhelming.”

The original plan to demonstrate their improved-program idea of putting tribal members into local construction careers with family supporting wages, benefits, and a respectable retirement was conceived by Ed Hensley of the Laborers International Union of North America (LIUNA) and Conrad Edwards. They applied to the Department of Interior’s Office of Indian Energy and Economic Development for money to deliver a jointly-sponsored demonstration project. Their objective was to prove that their former experience working on tribal employment preference on reservation projects could be done anywhere if the same model were used. As a result, professional on-site training and job placement was developed using LIUNA’s experience in developing custom training modules and CTER’s reputation for fighting to secure and increase

Indian employment preference. And it worked everywhere a tribe adopted it. Tribal members came to class every morning, received real hands-on training working on a tribal building in need of work, and then went home every evening knowing they were learning skills that would not only serve them but their tribe as well.

Working on a project by project basis, the NCCI program quickly

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Conrad Edwards, CEO
Council for Tribal Employment Rights

Cheyenne River Sioux Starts Entrepreneur Program with NCCI Help



Cheyenne River Tribe trainees join instructors Dan Kowalski (right) and Dan St. John (white hardhats) along with tribal staff at conclusion of first training module.

EAGLE BUTTE, SD - Impressed with the quality of the Native Construction Careers Institute (NCCI) 300 hour renovation and remodel training program that just graduated 15 trainees, the Cheyenne River tribe has opted for the proverbial icing on the cake and has requested the Custom 200 Hour NCCI Entrepreneur program. The program, pioneered earlier at the Spirit Lake Nation, is the next step in completing the training for the NCCI 300 hour graduates who have shown an aptitude and an interest in becoming specialty contractors.

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PARTNERSHIP UPDATE

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Entrepreneur Program: Promoting Indian Self-Determination

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"I'm proud of the relationships we've built with the various tribes throughout the US and Canada and I can say that I'm very proud of the synergistic-like relationship that the Cheyenne River tribe has established with our NCCI program" said Ed Hensley, the Laborer's Union North American Native Liaison. "We are always promoting the Indian Self-Determination aspect of the program. It's what we're all about, empowering tribal members to find good careers in construction."

Indian preference on public and tribal-funded construction projects is getting a lot of attention in Indian Country, so much attention that tribes are seeking out new ways to build up their Indian-owned contractor base and they are reaching into areas that were not always accessible - including union expertise. With the commitment of the Council for Tribal Employment Rights (CTER) and now the assurance to train on-site by all the NCCI signatory building trades unions, the effort to build that contractor base takes on new proportions. Professionally staffed program coupled with the resources made available by the thousands of union training arms brings the best that has ever entered into Indian Country.

"I've been watching the evolution of the NCCI program from an insider's viewpoint and it has been nothing short of awesome when it comes to the sincerity of all the building trades unions coming to the table and working with us as partners to make projects like this at Cheyenne River stand out as a model of things to come" said Conrad Edwards, CEO of CTER recently. "The program once again took

trainees, gave them skills and used a practical project, a men's halfway house, and everything worked like clockwork."

Of course it wouldn't work in the old style of training on the reservation where a dozen or so students were given a quick shot of training, only to find there were no job skills and no jobs at the end of the class. Since LIUNA took the lead in advising on planning and implementing strategic partnerships between the many tribal agencies and the union training units, the CTER field coordinator position has taken on an every greater form of necessity. The field coordinator is like an orchestra's conductor who knows how to ensure the overall partnership team flows like a symphony. A lot of strategic and tactical problems always arise due to many factors, but since NCCI has been involved in delivering the unique programs, each have achieved unequalled success in their goals.

"I am always amazed at how the people we train are so eager to learn. I guess once they found out that they have a possibility to work on their reservation, build a future and secure a retirement that will pay them to support their families for the rest of their lives, it was an easy choice to choose the NCCI program" said Kevin Buckles CTER's NCCI Field Representative. "I wish we would have had a program like this ready to go on every reservation, but funding comes from a variety of sources and those sources have to be hunted down and vetted to see if the funding source's goals are the same as ours and then we find out which tribes are eligible for the funds and we start the process."

NCCI: Gets much needed boost

Continued from other side-

became known as a program that a number of tribes wanted to "keep rolling" on their individual reservations after their first government-funded experience with the program. The Blackfeet Nation and Spirit Lake tribes have repeatedly asked for, and received, return visits of the mobile training programs after almost all of their program participants found ready employment with their new skills. Topping this is the fact that each training project resulted in increasing the value of tribal buildings and infrastructures.

"We have been invited to create an on-site construction training program for so many tribes that I honestly couldn't tell you how many, but now that we've got all the other construction unions believing the NCCI approach is the way to develop a program on a reservation, we are going to really expand the operation" commented Hensley who also serves as the Laborers Union's North American Native Liaison. "I believe we now have the horsepower to bring the best training and employment opportunities to tribes way beyond what we've done to date."

The move to formalize the original program took shape in Washington, DC with the help of CTER's General Counsel Dan Press and the Building and Construction Trades Department's, Bob Krul. Press, also



Before (top) and after (below) pictures of the Cheyenne River Tribe's practical class project for the 300 Hour Remodel and Renovation Program

a Capitol Hill lobbyist for CTER, was instrumental in drawing up the charter and helping move the program's concept through Congress gaining millions that the administration is supposed to utilize on the NCCI program.

"I think the Laborers Union and CTER struck on something that the other unions found merit in and we were able to bring the others to the table because it made so much sense" said Press after hearing about all the construction unions' pledges to support the institute. "This is one of the best things I've seen in my long career fighting for Indian job preference. The tribes and the construction unions are demonstrating a partnership and a level of respect that heretofore never existed. We are actually making history here."

CHANGING LIVES



BUILDING FUTURES